

THE YEAR BEGUN.

WASHINGTON'S SEASON IS NOW FAIRLY UNDER WAY.

Society at the Capital is a Wonderfully Complex Affair, and Walter Wellman Here Gives a Very Interesting Letter Upon the Subject.

Special Correspondence.]

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3.—The "season" has now fairly begun. Washington society has eagerly started on the merry round, for which the New Year's levee at the executive mansion was the signal, and which will abate only with the coming of Lent. What is Washington society? It is one of the most interesting things in the world. In its complex, shifting, transitory as to individuals, not thoroughly settled by forces, two in number which are not by any means the highest types of personal or social power. These types are politics and money getting. There is no other society in America so completely dominated by two such elements. Elsewhere family, long residence, professional or literary ability count for much. Here they count for little. A peculiarity of Washington society is that its leaders are crowned or debrained at the ballot boxes. The change of a few thousand votes in a single state keeps the balance of power in the society, gives, settles it to the four winds of the earth, and sets it in place a new center. Political fortune has in times past brought to the very forefront of this society individuals of unorthodox person and rude manners. Those have been presidents who spout tobacco juice on the carpets in the White House, and Mrs. Zach. Taylor used to smoke a corncob pipe in the East room. Illiterate, coarse men, from control of ignorant votes in a corrupt way through power in a consolidated district, a state, a nation, spread through all the states of political power, have risen to the honor of leadership in capital society. In its greater and controlling part this is a society of politicians. A price which the people have had to pay for popular government is the shame of seeing men make beasts of themselves in high places. In the lottery of politics many unworthy men have drawn great prizes. In days gone by these men brought ridicule upon the country. Travelers from foreign lands can here to their amazement see leaders who smile at tobacco and whisky, who are unashamed to sit at tables, who spilt wine and punch on the carpets of their hosts, who know not the proprieties of dress or the refinements of speech. For decades society at this capital was the laughing stock of nations.

The system has not been changed, but the people have changed. Coarseness and unchastity have had their day and disappeared. Politics still is the chief creative factor in Washington society, but its products are refined and uplifted. A political career and estate in life may not have advanced a single step since the days of Webster, Clay and Jackson, but the national society has made wonderful strides toward decency and gentility. Washington society is typical of the growth of the nation. Wealth has become a factor in politics greater than our forefathers dreamed of its being. Wealth brings to the descendants of its getter, if not to him, opportunities for education, social intercourse, cultivation for the requirements of the times. The future of the country is always toward its highest types. One vice after another is excommunicated; the coarse and vicious ones are left by the wayside. The nation has made that wonderful advance from the days of Jackson and Taylor which leads it now to look to the manners of the men it honors. Probably no Andrew Jackson would not have been elected president of the United States, nor would a Webster with a Webster's vices, notwithstanding his prowess by any president.

While the substance of this Washington society has vastly changed for the better, its form remains the same. It is, however, more distinctively an official society. It is born of the elective franchise. Its center is in the president and their radiations are largely through the avenues of his favor or of the favor of the same people who made him. As it is now an official society, so was it under Washington, Adams, Jackson and Harrison the first. But a new element has been added—wealth. Years ago there was no unofficial society. Now the unofficial society of a capital city, composed of such wealthy men, is more important and influential. The number of rich residents attracted here by social opportunities and other delights of the city is rapidly growing. Income is almost an effect for political station, and capital society is now seen in two divisions, as follows:

OFFICIAL SOCIETY. CIVILIAN SOCIETY.

The President.

A Five Millionaires.

The Chief Justice.

A Two Millions.

The Vice President.

A Million.

General of the Army.

A British Entertainer.

Senate.

Associate Justices.

Benevolent Societies.

These orders of social precedence might be extended indefinitely. In the official order should be added the judges of the court of claims, judges of the supreme court of the District of Columbia, officers of the army, navy and marine corps according to their rank; the commissioners of agriculture, the civil service commissioners, assistant secretaries of departments, assistant postmasters general, solicitor general, assistant attorney general, heads of bureaus, officers of the service, and house, chiefs of division, clerks, in the departments, janitors, charwomen.

To the unofficial list should be added all sorts of people, with the amount of their money possessions and willingness to part therewith in entertaining always in view as factors of the classification. Occasionally, too, literary or professional celebrity, or family connections in part outweigh mere money, or assist a little money to go a long ways.

But let no one suppose that this society is rigid, exclusive, cold, altogether formal, perhaps haughty. You can make human nature more or less charming and perfect, if you try more than you can a handiwork. Notably that has been so much as a glimpse of the Washington society of the present and who has heard ever so little of the Washington society of forty years ago would want to go back to the old thing, no matter how pleasing to his ear may be the trite phrases about republican simplicity and honest uprightness. The modern society is as much an improvement on the old as the typical American home of today, with its piano, books, dabbling in art and literature on the part of its occupants, is an improvement on the old, though not of our bones but rough, unpolished. The official and unofficial sets both admiringly. Occasionally some poor but bright persons get in and enjoy themselves. Young men and women from all over

MUSTANG LINIMENT
HEALS INFLAMMATION, OLD SORES,
CAKED BREASTS & INSECT BITES!

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NEW YORK FASHIONS.

OLIVE HARPER WRITES FOR THE LADIES FAIR.

She Has No Trouble in Finding Plenty of Novelties with Which to Amuse and Interest Her Sisters, and Here Are the Latest.

[Special Correspondence.]

NEW YORK, Jan. 3.—Often when I have finished a letter on fashions I wonder where I am going to find something new for the next week, but by the time the

New York English is said to be over, and that it has been often necessary for her coachman to carry her from the sidewalk to her room. Of another woman, high in social circles through her husband's official station, it is said she once connived with an attaché of one of the foreign legations to ruin the reputation, though they were unable to degrade the character, of a young lady of whom this woman was envious. Water will find its level even in this artificially constructed social pool, and these women, though not thrown completely out of the current, are shunned and held in no mean disrepute.

And then there is Mrs. Whitney, the famous wife of the secretary of the navy. Here is where dollars have helped again. Though the navy portfolio is fourth in the list of cabinet positions, Secretary and Mrs. Whitney have made it first in social importance. But they have not been able to do this through wealth alone. They have had advantages which few in high stations in this city possess. They have had social influence, and that is all. In this country, incidental to all other forms of education, to all other activities, Mr. and Mrs. Whitney entertain lavishly; they keep four houses and an army of servants. A common estimate of Mrs. Whitney, and the effect thereof on acquaintance with her, may be clearly shown in the words of Senator Bowen, a charming woman from Colorado.

"I had stood in a little dread of Mrs. Whitney," said Mrs. Bowen; "I had heard of her as the social queen, the woman of vast wealth, intelligent, the Vanderbilt and Astor of the West."

I had thought her a good girl, and when I saw her a tea day at the Biggs house, to which she was expected, I fairly dreaded the moment in which she should make her appearance. I was nervous lest she should be too lofty, or there should be something to be criticized.

But when Mrs. Whitney came I found she was more than a society leader—she was a woman. She has a heart. In a few minutes we were good friends.

Now there is a new instance of the tendency to which the novelty hunters will go; they will wear ugly, unbecoming things just to be ahead of everybody else. But, though they may not excite admiration, they know they will enjoy helping to buy new things. Only, I know, that she has a heart, and her complexion fair enough in summer, is as rosy as her hair in winter. The rage for Grecian color started, and she was the first to wear an entire suit of that color, bonnet and gloves to match. She wore it in Washington, and it was said that she illuminated the whole capital city, and much was written about it in the newspapers. Everybody who had any respect for herself or family immediately adopted terra cotta as a color, and when she had a second costume of that color she promptly gave hers to a chambermaid at the Elbow Inn.

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